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*John* iii. 31-36.

BY REV. W. N. CLARKE.

ASSUMING that this passage records an utterance of the Evangelist, not of the Baptist, I find it a summary and reflection upon a cycle of our Lord's ministry, similar to the summary that closes the record of His ministry as a whole, at ch. xii, 37-50.

Between ch. ii, 13 and iii, 30, the Evangelist sets before us a cycle of ministry elsewhere unrecorded, and strikingly parallel to the ministry as a whole, as he presents it. The passage recounts (1) a visit of the Messiah to the royal city: (2) an act that asserts His Messiahship: (3) a quiet but decided rejection of Him by the religious leaders: (4) the performance of "signs" in the presence of the people: (5) the rising of an unsatisfactory faith in many: (6) the opening of high truth to an exceptional inquirer: (7) retirement of the Messiah, and fresh testimony to Him from the Baptist. The resemblance of this to the substance of the Fourth Gospel as a whole is obvious. Here are the characteristic facts and views of this Gospel, — the appearing of the Christ at Jerusalem, only to be rejected by the religious guides of Israel, — a presence, life-giving and judgment-working, of the Son of God, — blindness in the many, manifestation to the few, — retirement at last.

At the end of this paragraph the Evangelist, as at the end of his longer narrative, sums up the significance of acceptance and rejection of the Christ. His thoughts are these: —

1. Compared with all earthly teachers, Jesus, the Messiah, coming from above, is supremely great (v. 31).
2. The testimony that He has borne was worthy to be received, but has been rejected (v. 32).
3. Such is His relation to God, that to accept His testimony is to assent to God Himself (vv. 33-35).
4. Eternal life and the wrath of God hang upon acceptance and rejection of Him (v. 36).

These are the very thoughts that lay upon the writer's mind when he summed up the significance of the whole ministry to men, in ch. xii, 37-50.

I think, then, that when the Evangelist made record of that early Judean ministry which he alone records, he recognized in it a preliminary cycle of activity, similar in meaning to the ministry that followed on the larger field of Galilee and Jerusalem. I think he regarded it as a miniature ministry, foreshadowing only too truly the meaning and issues of the whole life of Christ.